

**Ranking Member Tom Davis
Opening Statement**

**“Reforming the Presidential Library Funding Disclosure
Process”**

**Wednesday, February 28, 2007
10:00 a.m.**

Room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing today.

Our Nation’s Presidential libraries are a priceless resource for researchers, historians, and the public. Attracting millions of visitors each year, they serve as legacies to our Presidents, repositories of history, and a source of tremendous pride for local communities. At the same time, they have become elaborate institutions, housing official papers, museums, classrooms, conference facilities, and even gift shops. And with this expansion, the cost of building and maintaining these facilities has grown dramatically.

Under current law, presidential libraries are built with private funds, then turned over to the Archivist for operation.

Amendments to the Presidential Libraries Act mandated the establishment of an endowment to cover some of the costs of operating the library, which are usually met through the establishment of a charitable organization. Funding for construction and the endowment comes from private sources. But under current law, no duty to disclose the source of those contributions exists.

Clearly, there is a great deal of interest in enhancing disclosure on both sides of the aisle. Under our colleague Mr. Duncan's lead, we passed solid bipartisan legislation to require the disclosure of contributions to organizations that raise funds for presidential libraries and related facilities. His bill (H.R. 577 from the 107th Congress) passed this Committee and the House with strong bipartisan support.

Regardless of what we do, I think it's of utmost importance that we avoid any temptation to politicize this issue. We need a sensible, even-handed approach to disclosure, one that applies equally to Democrats and Republicans. Mr. Duncan had the right approach, one that was supported by Chairman Waxman and many others on this Committee. I know the Committee will consider legislation on this issue soon, and I hope we again will resist inserting politics into a bill the House passed overwhelmingly, by a vote of 392 to 3.

With this legislation we are recognizing the perception of impropriety that contributions to a presidential library can raise. We don't need to re-open old wounds or begin inflicting new ones today. Presidents leave their MARC on our RICH history, and those giving to presidential libraries should be proud to have their donations publicly disclosed.

Mr. Chairman, our goal should be a unanimous vote in committee and on the House floor, and I look forward to working

with you to craft bipartisan legislation. I know you agree. The cost of building presidential libraries: millions. The value of disclosing contributions to those libraries: priceless.